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STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA;  
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TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [TC](#)  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: GCC SUMMIT/IRAQI ELECTIONS

¶1. SUMMARY: SPECIFIC COMMENTARY ON THE GCC SUMMIT AND ELECTIONS IN IRAQ. AL-KHALEEJ PAPER CRITICIZED THE GULF SUMMIT AS FOCUSING ONLY ON THE BUSINESS BETWEEN THE GULF STATES AND NOT THE DAILY PROBLEMS OF GULF CITIZENS. AL-BAYAN QUESTIONED THE ROLE OF THE GCC COUNSELING COMMITTEE AND HOPED THAT WOMEN WOULD BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE POLITICALLY. AL-ITTIHAD EXPRESSED OPTIMISM ABOUT THE GULF SUMMIT, VIEWING IT AS A CONTINUATION OF PREVIOUS SUCCESSFUL STEPS. AL KHALEEJ LAUDED THE IRAQI ELECTIONS STATING THAT THIS TIME ALL IRAQIS FROM DIFFERENT CREEDS ARE PARTICIPATING. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Under the headline "Gulf summit between the proposed, the deferred and the anticipated", Dr. Mohd bin Huwaiden, a UAE editorialist wrote on Sharjah-based Pan-Arab daily "Al Khaleej," (circulation 85,000)

"There are high expectations for the Gulf summit due to take place in Abu Dhabi this Sunday. However, this summit is not expected to produce any radical decisions. It will only be a continuation of the steps taken in 2001, which brought up commercial issues and resulted in a commercial agreement."

"In the previous summits, a number of decisions were made with respect to Gulf state citizens traveling to and doing business in the region. With due respect to all the accomplishments of the previous Gulf summit, it couldn't win the heart of the Gulf

citizen despite all of the decisions that were made. The reason for this is that the Gulf summit never solved the troubles and worries of Gulf citizens. The summit was able to win the hearts of Gulf businessmen, who are now better off with a united customs regime. However, it should also show some care towards normal Gulf citizens."

13. Under the headline "Revamping the Gulf Summit", Dubai-Based Arabic Daily "Al Bayan" (circulation 90,000) editorialized:

"In the past, the Gulf summit's main concern was to enhance commercial cooperation between the GCC states."

"Women should be allowed to get involved with the establishment of the national council since they represent half of our society. The subject of women should not be treated differently from that of men. Some countries have allowed women to participate politically as in Kuwait but the political Islamic tides came as an obstacle between them."

"The question is 'How can the counseling committee for the GCC be developed?' This committee, which was formed back in 1996 by the GCC leaders, seems to have a vague role. It needs to have an effective role and include women."

14. Abu Awad wrote in his daily column in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic Daily "Al Ittihad," (circulation 65,000):

"Hopes rise with the convening of the Gulf summit in Abu Dhabi for making the dreams of Gulf citizens come true and for recording more success in their steps towards further collaboration among the Gulf States."

"Ideas such as a united customs regime have come true and now we can daily see with our eyes in the streets of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Jeddah, Muscat, Manama, Kuwait and Doha that slogans such as 'the gulf nationalism' have been made real."

"We hope for more of these positive steps to take place tomorrow."

15. Under the headline "Hope Summit", Abu Dhabi-Based Arabic daily "Al Ittihad wrote," (circulation 65,000):

"The Gulf summit has succeeded in about a quarter of a century in unifying the Gulf dream, especially in the economic sector. The GCC people look forward to further success in supporting its missions in all sectors."

16. Under the headline "First step towards a difficult path", Sharjah-Based Pan-Arab daily "Al Khaleej," (circulation 85,000) editorialized:

"IRAQIS ARE NOW WALKING ON THE RIGHT TRACK. IT IS TRUE THAT THE IRAQI ELECTIONS ARE TAKING PLACE UNDER THE PRESENCE OF THE OCCUPIER AND ACCORDING TO THEIR RULES AND CONDITIONS. IT IS TRUE THAT THE ELECTORAL LISTS WERE FORMED ON THE BASIS OF CREED AND SECT AT THE OCCUPIER'S ENCOURAGEMENT. BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT IRAQIS HAVE PROVEN THEIR ABILITY TO ENDURE THE DIFFICULTIES, IMPEDIMENTS AND THREATS CAUSED BY THE OCCUPIER AND THE DARK FORCES THAT USE RELIGION AS A PRETEXT FOR BLOODSHED. THE IRAQIS WENT TO THE POLLING STATIONS TO PULL IRAQ FROM ITS CURRENT DILEMMA AND TOWARDS A FREE AND UNIFIED IRAQ. THE KEY ISSUE ABOUT THIS ELECTION IS THAT THIS TIME ALL IRAQIS FROM DIFFERENT CREEDS ARE VOTING. IT SEEMS THAT THEY ALL NOW BELIEVE THAT DEMOCRACY MUST BE FOR ALL AND THAT REBUILDING IRAQ REQUIRES THE EFFORT OF ALL IRAQIS."

"Now it is the responsibility of the Iraqi parliament to form a unified Iraq free from occupation and terror. This is not an easy task, but there is a spark of hope that this first step will pave the way for Iraqis to put an end to their grief and their country's occupation. "

17. UNDER THE HEADLINE "VOICE OF THE IRAQIS", SHARJAH-BASED

ENGLISH DAILY "THE GULF TODAY" (CIRCULATION 15,000)  
EDITORIALIZED:

"AMID THE CHAOS OF BOMBING AND CLATTER OF GUNFIRE, THE CONFIDENT VOICE OF THE IRAQIS CAME THROUGH STRONGLY. ELEVEN MILLION AMONG THE 15 MILLION ELIGIBLE VOTERS HAD CAST THE BALLOT IN THE LANDMARK POLL. ITS OUTCOME IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL DECIDE THE COURSE OF IRAQ HISTORY."

"The insurgents, who claimed to represent the Sunnis, saw the community choosing the ballot over the bullet. If there had been more polling booths in Sunni-dominated areas, the voting percentage would have been higher. They were willing to defy Al Qaeda's call to scuttle the electoral process. "

"Bush proclaimed that the vote was a major milestone and hoped the US would have a democratic ally. But the quality of that alliance depends on the kind of ties Washington intends to build with Baghdad's new rulers. Any overbearing sign will meet with resistance."

"Attempts to leverage the new Baghdad government as an instrument of US policy to dominate the Middle East will fail. The Iraqis are proud people, who will refuse any interference. They want to rebuild the country with their own hands, as Prime Minister Ibrahim Al Jaafari said. He expressed the ordinary Iraqi's sentiment when he said people want to turn their poverty into wealth and misery into happiness with resources God granted them. The months ahead are crucial for Iraq and the entire region."

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